



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702

## FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Peter Eldridge, [Peter.Eldridge@noaa.gov](mailto:Peter.Eldridge@noaa.gov)  
(727) 570-5305; FAX (727) 570-5583  
<http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov>

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 3, 2000  
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## Proposed Special Management Zones off Georgia

NOAA Fisheries has published a proposed rule that would establish 12 new special management zones (SMZs) at the sites of artificial reefs (ARs) in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off Georgia; revise the boundaries of the 7 existing SMZs that are in the EEZ; restrict fishing in the new and existing SMZs to rod and reel and spearfishing gear, including powerheads; and limit the harvest and possession of South Atlantic snapper-grouper taken by powerheads to the applicable bag limits.

The 19 SMZs in the EEZ are at the sites of ARs constructed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The ARs were constructed for the purpose of enhancing fishing opportunities for offshore sport fishermen. All of the sites are on sandy bottoms that formerly did not support any significant fisheries. The enhanced fishing benefits created by ARs could be lost by allowing highly efficient fishing gear to harvest fish within SMZs. Such an event would result in a few fishermen taking most of the harvest. This practice would essentially eliminate the benefits intended for ARs and would jeopardize the incentive to build additional ARs.

Copies of the regulatory amendment that proposes the establishment of the SMZs can be obtained from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, One

Southpark Circle, Suite 306, Charleston, SC 29407-4699; phone 843-571-4366; FAX: 843-769-4520.

**DATES:** Comments on the proposed rule must be in writing and received no later than August 2, 2000 at the Southeast Regional Office.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments and requests for copies of the proposed rule should be sent to Peter Eldridge, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive No., St. Petersburg, FL 33702. Comments also may be sent via fax to 727-570-5583. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet.

NOAA Fisheries will consider all comments received on or before August 2, 2000, in its decision to approve, disapprove or partially disapprove the proposed rule. In a subsequent final rule, NOAA Fisheries will respond to all comments received.

This and other news releases are available on the Southeast Regional Office homepage at <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov/>.

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